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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:


I am deeply disturbed by the shocking assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Ms. Bhutto's murder was a heinous crime and untimely setback for the democratic institutions that the people of Pakistan are fighting to achieve. As a world leader with deeply rooted global interests for democracy to flourish in Pakistan, America must do more than condemn this assassination; we must take every step to help the Pakistan people back towards the path of achieving democracy. It is in that spirit that I ask you to work with the Pakistani government and the international community to ensure an immediate independent investigation of this terror attack.

Securing an independent investigation into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto is only the first step that should be taken to help the people of Pakistan, but it is a vital step. An independent investigation is the only way to bring closure to those who are determined to build a more democratic Pakistan. With respect to Pakistan's sovereignty, I ask that you work expeditiously to convince President Musharraf and members of his government that an independent investigation is in Pakistan's best interest. It may be the only way for President Musharraf to reassure Pakistan that the individuals or organizations responsible for this brutal attack will be brought to justice. I also ask that you engage the international community in applying pressure on the Pakistani government and work towards the formation of a multinational coalition capable of conducting an impartial investigation. Without the assistance of an independent authority, I fear the further destabilization of one of the most critical regions in the world. In order to maintain Pakistan as a prominent strategic partner in the war on terror, we must do everything in our power to ensure that the people of Pakistan never lose sight of the prospect for robust democracy.

When elections are held in nations that are just beginning to move towards democracy, we have always insisted on the presence of international election monitors to sanction the vote and provide legitimacy to the results. Similarly, an independent investigation into this assassination would ensure validity. The investigation's findings would provide the people of Pakistan with an important peace of mind.

I hope that you will immediately act upon this request during these trying times for the people of Pakistan. Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress